

March 13, 1944

Mr. Roosevelt Should Speak Out

It is time to admit the blunt truth that we are now failing pretty dismally on the political front. There are some deep differences of opinion dividing Messrs. Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt; and it is obviously better to get on with the war than to turn aside and start fighting among ourselves over those issues which cannot now be reconciled. But there is a large area not affected by these disagreements, where the most urgent effort should have been made long ago to come to understandings and to use those understandings as a diplomatic weapon against our enemies.

So far as can be discerned, almost nothing of the kind has thus far been done. Either we have gone back to secret diplomacy with a vengeance, or we are neglecting several highly important problems—or perhaps a mixture of both. We continue to ask for "unconditional surrender"; and it is desirable that the enemy should lay down his arms without stipulating terms. (We haven't been very consistent about this, however; at Cairo, we gave Japan a set of terms. Russia has given Finland a set of terms.) But our demand for unconditional surrender doesn't mean that we should not give the enemy any inkling of the kind of world we propose to make, and his role in it. As a matter of fact, we are already doing this, but by indirection and clumsily. The Germans have excellent access to our press; when The London Times demands that Germany should not be dismembered, the enemy knows at least that dismemberment is under serious discussion.

It is easy to see why Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin have each, for various reasons, hesitated to describe this war in any sort of idealistic terms, or to say for what kind of world we are fighting. We believe, however, that as far as Mr. Roosevelt is concerned, the time for silence has passed. It is absolutely imperative that the Americans, at any rate, should have a definite assurance that our government will do everything in its power to keep this war, now that it is no longer a mere battle for survival, from degenerating into a struggle for the maintenance of the status quo, to turn it, as far as is humanly possible, into a war for the deepening and extension of democratic principles and for permanent peace.

Massacre by Bombing

The pacifists and clergymen who have protested against the bombing of German cities have a case, but it is not the kind of case they set forth. Any humane person must shrink at the horrors of war, and especially of war as it is now carried on. We don't like the thought that German men, women and children are being killed, maimed and rendered homeless. We don't like the thought, either, that millions of American young men in the armed forces are in danger of being killed and wounded, and are killing and wound-

ing others. In short, we detest war. But there are times when war cannot be ended by detesting it. People not alive are in one of these tragic periods. Those who take up arms to end aggression by others against humanity must do what is necessary to win. Then they must make as sure as they can that war does not occur again.

This does not mean that every atrocity and cruelty is justifiable in a justifiable war. There is everything to be said against bombing defenseless people merely to instil terror in them; one of the things to be said is that there are narrow limits to its effectiveness. But, so far as we are aware, this is not the practice of the RAF and the AAF. They are bombing cities which are essential centers of arms manufacture and transport. They are bombing the factories, docks, railroads and warehouses in which war work is carried on. If, as is inevitable in such attacks, civilians suffer, they are in large part civilians who take this essential part in total war. It is late in the day to appeal to the codes of warfare appropriate to the romantic times when war was a sort of game carried on by professional soldiers, and "non-combatants" had no part in willing the war, in carrying it on, or in willing its end.

Nazism at Home

One of the reasons free men despise the Nazis is that they suppress scientific truth when they do not like it. Another is that they preach racial superiority. Representative May of Kentucky has not actually burned any books, but he has performed the American equivalent of Nazi intolerance in campaigning against the pamphlet issued by the Public Affairs Committee on "The Races of Mankind." The Public Affairs Committee has no axe to grind, but conscientiously tries to inform the public about important facts, as accurately as scientific research can discover them. The pamphlet in question did not, as he says, describe "Northern Negroes as the equals in intelligence of Southern white men," although that in cases is true; some Negroes are the equals in intelligence of men of any race or region. What it did do was to make plain the scientific conclusion of anthropologists and biologists that no scale of inferiority or superiority can be discovered on the basis of race alone; variations within races, plus environment, are the chief factors in this matter.

Mr. May claims the credit for stopping the distribution of this pamphlet in the army; the War Department asserts that it was held up before Mr. May protested. If so, the army authorities who took the action are equally reprehensible. Of course the army as a bureaucratic institution cannot be expected to assault domestic prejudices with as much courage as it displays against the foreign enemy, but our military authorities have been far behind the British in the political education of soldiers which makes them good fighters in this kind of war.